

Some Coyote Facts

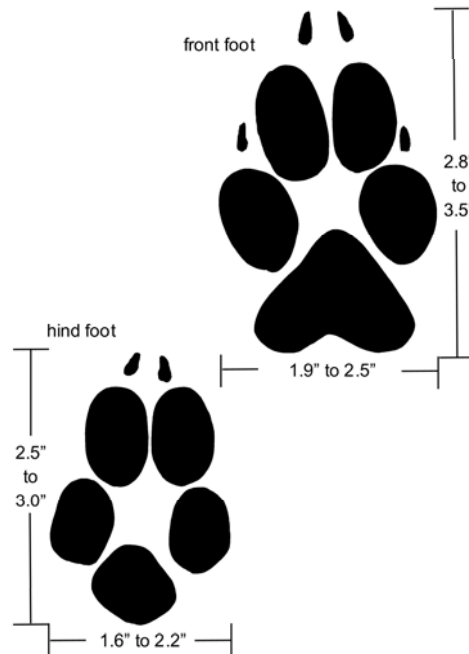
Description: Coyotes are medium sized members of the dog family resembling a small German shepherd with a long slender snout and erect pointed ears. Their long fur can make them look larger than they actually are. Average weight in the Eastern U.S. is about 35 pounds, about 10 pounds heavier than their Midwestern cousins. As coyotes expanded their range east through Canada and the Southern US they occasionally interbred with wolves, resulting in a distinctly larger subspecies which we now call the Eastern Coyote.

Diet: Small mammals, birds, insects, reptiles, fruit, and carrion. Where accessible, garbage, compost, pet food left outdoors, birdseed; rarely unprotected small livestock and pets.

Breeding: Breeding season is February – March. Gestation period is 63-65 days. Female has one litter of 4-8 puppies a year, usually in April or May.

Family life: Male and female may mate for life. Coyotes associate in loosely organized groups but where food is plentiful, they may form packs similar to wolves consisting of a breeding pair and their offspring from the previous year or two. Coyote packs are less stable than those of wolves.

Vocalizations: Coyotes have a variety of calls they use to communicate. Best known are the yips and howls used to announce the presence of an animal or group, define territories, attract mates, and avoid face-to-face conflicts.



Coyote tracks range from 2.5 to 3.5 inches long and 1.75 to 2.5 inches wide. The middle two toenails usually point forward and are close together. They are often in a fairly straight line with tracks spaced 19 to 23" apart.



Look for tracks along dirt roads or in the snow.



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Living with Coyotes in Montgomery County Maryland



**M-NCPPC, Montgomery Parks
Natural Resources Division**



Coyotes bring change

Once a symbol of the American West, coyotes are now present in every state in the continental US, with Maryland and Delaware being the last areas to be colonized. Coyotes have been present in Montgomery County since the late 1980's. However, sightings have increased noticeably since 2004 indicating that they have become well established.



While wolves and other large predators were present in the eastern U.S. until the mid 1800s, coyotes are a completely new species to our area. As populations grow they will certainly impact our resident wildlife. Red fox populations will decrease as they compete with coyotes for food and territory. Other medium sized mammals like groundhogs, opossums and free roaming domestic cats may be utilized as prey species. Predation on white-tailed deer fawns, and Canada geese may help stabilize high populations of these species.

Living with Coyotes

Coyotes will also impact human residents of the county. Individual coyotes that become too comfortable around humans can quickly become pests as they exploit potential food sources like pet food bowls left outside, bird feeders, compost piles, and even small pets. To live in peace with our new neighbors we are going to have to adapt to their presence.

Above all, we must keep coyotes wild and fearful of humans.

Here are some things to do and not do in order to minimize conflicts.

- **NEVER FEED COYOTES OR WILDLIFE (other than songbirds)**
- **Don't leave bowls of pet food or water outside at night**
- **Keep garbage in sturdy containers with tight fitting lids**
- **Keep compost that contains food materials in enclosed bins**
- **Keep bird feeders out of reach and don't let seeds pile up on the ground**
- **Keep cats indoors**
- **Keep dogs inside at night**
- **Watch small dogs while outside**
- **Always walk your dogs on a leash**
- **Supervise children under 5 years old when outdoors at all times.**
- **Close off crawl spaces under porches and sheds where coyotes could rest or make a den**
- **Don't tolerate coyotes around your yard – chase them off by yelling, throwing sticks, etc.**

What should I do if I see a coyote while walking on a trail?

First, consider yourself lucky to have the opportunity to observe a wild predator in its natural environment. Take a moment and watch them. Generally, coyotes are shy and will run as soon as they see or smell a human. In the unusual event that the coyote seems unafraid, chase it off by waiving your hands over your head to appear as large as possible and yelling in a deep voice. If need be, throw sticks or rocks to scare it off. Most animals quickly run off. If a coyote is persistent and threatening in its behavior, walk (don't run) towards an area with people or back to your car while maintaining eye contact with the animal.

Report aggressive coyote behavior to Park Authorities. For Montgomery County Parkland call 301-949-4149 or 2909. For other areas call the Maryland Department of Natural Resources Emergency number 1-410-260-8888.

If you experience problems with coyotes or other wildlife around your home call the toll free Maryland Wildlife Information Line at (877) 463-6497.

For more information visit:

www.dnr.state.md.us/wildlife/coyote.html
www.aphis.usda.gov/lpa/pubs/fsheet_fa_notice/fs_wscoyote.pdf

